

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-32 (Canceled).

Claim 33 (New): A frame for bounding an open, upper end of a downwardly extending recess formed in a floor or the ground, the frame comprising:

an upstanding, peripheral wall having protruding outwardly therefrom a flange that is embeddable in a medium so as to retain the frame relative to said recess; and

the frame including secured thereto within the peripheral wall at least two seatings for at least one cover that is insertable into the frame with the peripheral wall surrounding at least part of the cover, the at least two seatings each including a seating member having secured thereto a resiliently deformable pad at least a part of which protrudes from the seating member to provide a resiliently deformable seating surface that is engageable by a part of the cover, each seating also including a cuboidal block of material defining an in-use upwardly facing shoulder that is in use of the frame inclined to define respective upper and lower shoulder edges, directions of inclination of the shoulders being such as to promote self-centering of a cover supported thereby.

Claim 34 (New): A frame according to Claim 33, wherein the resiliently deformable pad is releasably securable in a seating member.

Claim 35 (New): A frame according to Claim 33, wherein the upstanding wall is rectangular when viewed in plan, the frame including the seating in at least two corners of the thus-defined rectangle.

Claim 36 (New): A frame according to Claim 34, including the seating in all four corners of the rectangle.

Claim 37 (New): A frame according to Claim 33, wherein the upstanding wall is rectangular when viewed in plan, the frame including at least one of the seatings part-way along at least one side of the thus-defined rectangle.

Claim 38 (New): A frame according to Claim 33, wherein each upwardly facing shoulder has formed therein a mortise that defines a slot that is open on the upwardly facing shoulder and on a further face of the cuboidal block.

Claim 39 (New): A frame according to Claim 38, wherein the mortise defines a base that in use of the frame lies beneath the shoulder, the mortise tapering in width between the base and its opening on the shoulder, the resiliently deformable pad including an engaging portion of generally complementary cross section to that of the mortise, the pad being restrained against movement relative to the mortise in the in-use vertical direction by engagement of the engaging portion in the mortise.

Claim 40 (New): A frame according to claim 39, wherein the pad includes a region of material that is secured to the engaging portion and protrudes from the seating member via the opening in the shoulder.

Claim 41 (New): A frame according to Claim 38, wherein the opening in the further face of the cuboidal block is of a shape and orientation that permits insertion of the pad into the slot and its removal therefrom, in a direction other than the in-use vertical direction.

Claim 42 (New): A frame according to Claim 33, including a pair of the seating members that are spaced from one another in the in-use horizontal direction and the upwardly facing shoulders of which are mirror images of one another whereby the upper shoulder edges define the furthest spaced apart regions of the pair of seating members.

Claim 43 (New): A frame according to Claim 33, including one or more covers resting thereon.

Claim 44 (New): A frame according to Claim 41, wherein the frame and each cover include co-operating hinge parts formed respectively on a side of the cover and a first side of the frame whereby the cover is hingedly secured to the frame at the first side thereof, the cover substantially spanning the frame from the first side to a second side opposite the first side.

Claim 45 (New): A frame according to Claim 44, wherein the second side has secured thereat a respective pair of the seatings that are engageable by the underside of each of the covers.

Claim 46 (New): A frame according to Claim 44, that is essentially rectangular and includes a plurality of the covers arranged side by side, all of the covers being hinged on a same side of the frame whereby the covers are openable to leave free access to the recess on all remaining sides of the frame.

Claim 47 (New): A frame according to Claim 46, wherein the upstanding wall is rectangular when viewed in plan, and wherein each cover is rectangular, a major axis of each cover lying perpendicular to a major axis of the rectangle defined by the upstanding wall, and edges of adjacent of the covers lying spaced from one another such that the covers are configured to overlies substantially an entire aperture defined by the recess.

Claim 48 (New): A frame according to Claim 44, wherein one or more of the covers is substantially imperforate.

Claim 49 (New): A frame according to Claim 33, wherein one or more of the covers is perforated to define a grating.

Claim 50 (New): A frame according to Claim 33, wherein a width of the flange varies from place to place about the periphery of the frame.

Claim 51 (New): A frame according to Claim 33, including protrusions or recesses formed on one or more surfaces thereof that are embeddable in a bonding medium at the open, upper end of the recess, the protrusions or recesses enhancing bonding of the frame in the medium and stiffening the frame.

Claim 52 (New): A frame according to Claim 51, wherein the protrusions or recesses include an array of ribs formed on an upwardly and/or downwardly facing surface of the flange.

Claim 53 (New): A frame according to Claim 52, wherein the ribs of the array are elongate and are mutually parallel, and all protrude by generally a same amount from the flange.

Claim 54 (New): A frame according to Claim 53, wherein the frame is generally polygonal when viewed in plan, and wherein the elongate axis of each rib is generally parallel with a diagonal of the thus-defined polygon.

Claim 55 (New): A manhole assembly comprising:  
a frame for bounding an open, upper end of a downwardly extending recess formed in a floor or the ground, the frame comprising:

an upstanding, peripheral wall having protruding outwardly therefrom a flange that is embeddable in a medium so as to retain the frame relative to said recess; and  
the frame including secured thereto within the peripheral wall at least two seatings for at least one cover that is insertable into and removable from the frame with the peripheral wall surrounding at least part of the cover;  
at least four resiliently deformable pads each interconnecting said cover and said seating when the cover is inserted in the frame, the resiliently deformable pads lying at corners of a quadrilateral thereby defined on an in-use underside of the one or more covers, each seating also including a cuboidal block of material defining an in-use upwardly facing shoulder that is in use of the frame inclined to define respective upper and lower shoulder edges, directions of inclination of the shoulders being such as to promote self-centering of a cover supported thereby.

Claim 56 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 55, wherein each resiliently deformable pad is releasably securable in a seating member.

Claim 57 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 55, wherein the upstanding wall is rectangular when viewed in plan, the frame including the seating in at least two corners of the thus-defined rectangle.

Claim 58 (New): A manhole assembly to Claim 56, including the seating in all four corners of the rectangle.

Claim 59 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 55, wherein the upstanding wall is rectangular when viewed in plan, the frame including at least one of the seatings part-way along at least one side of the thus-defined rectangle.

Claim 60 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 55, wherein each upwardly facing shoulder has formed therein a mortise that defines a slot that is open on the upwardly facing shoulder and on a further face of the cuboidal block.

Claim 61 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 60, wherein the mortise defines a base that in use of the frame lies beneath the shoulder, the mortise tapering in width between the base and its opening on the shoulder, the resiliently deformable pad including an engaging portion of generally complementary cross section to that of the mortise, the pad being restrained against movement relative to the mortise in the in-use vertical direction by engagement of the engaging portion in the mortise.

Claim 62 (New): A manhole assembly according to claim 61, wherein the pad includes a region of material that is secured to the engaging portion and protrudes from the seating member via the opening in the shoulder.

Claim 63 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 60, wherein the opening in the further face of the cuboidal block is of a shape and orientation that permits insertion of the pad into the slot and its removal therefrom, in a direction other than the in-use vertical direction.

Claim 64 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 55, including a pair of the seating members that are spaced from one another in the in-use horizontal direction and the upwardly facing shoulders of which are mirror images of one another whereby the upper shoulder edges define the furthest spaced apart regions of the pair of seating members.

Claim 65 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 55, including one or more covers resting thereon.

Claim 66 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 63, wherein the frame and each cover include co-operating hinge parts formed respectively on a side of the cover and a first side of the frame whereby the cover is hingedly secured to the frame at the first side thereof, the cover substantially spanning the frame from the first side to a second side opposite the first side.

Claim 67 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 66, wherein the second side has secured thereat a respective pair of the seatings that are engageable by the underside of each of the covers.

Claim 68 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 65, wherein the frame is essentially rectangular and includes a plurality of the covers arranged side by side, all of the covers being hinged on a same side of the frame whereby the covers are openable to leave free access to the recess on all remaining sides of the frame.

Claim 69 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 68, wherein the upstanding wall is rectangular when viewed in plan, and wherein each cover is rectangular, a major axis of each cover lying perpendicular to a major axis of the rectangle defined by the upstanding wall, and edges of adjacent of the covers lying spaced from one another such that the covers are configured to overlies substantially an entire aperture defined by the recess.

Claim 70 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 65, wherein one or more of the covers is substantially imperforate.

Claim 71 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 65, wherein one or more of the covers is perforated to define a grating.

Claim 72 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 55, wherein a width of the flange varies from place to place about the periphery of the frame.



Claim 73 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 55, wherein the frame includes protrusions or recesses formed on one or more surfaces thereof that are embeddable in a bonding medium at the open, upper end of the recess, the protrusions or recesses enhancing bonding of the frame in the medium and stiffening the frame.

Claim 74 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 73, wherein the protrusions or recesses include an array of ribs formed on an upwardly and/or downwardly facing surface of the flange.

Claim 75 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 74, wherein the ribs of the array are elongate and are mutually parallel, and all protrude by generally a same amount from the flange.

Claim 76 (New): A manhole assembly according to Claim 75, wherein the frame is generally polygonal when viewed in plan, and wherein the elongate axis of each rib is generally parallel with a diagonal of the thus-defined polygon.